

The Director  
Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D.C. 20505

22 December 1977

Mr. Claud H. Corrigan  
Public Administration Service  
1776 Massachusetts Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20036

Dear Mr. Corrigan:

I appreciate your sincere and well reasoned plea of 2 December 1977 concerning the National Intelligence Survey (NIS). Your description of the rationale for terminating the NIS Program is essentially correct and, as I am sure you are well aware, the decision was neither easy nor unanimous. In fact, the official record speaks of the substantial, lasting and influential contributions made by those involved in the NIS Program and the almost universal expression of regret that the Program had to be terminated. And, in 1976, several years after the demise of the Program, high-level consideration was given to its reinstatement.

Nevertheless, the resource restraints and the changing intelligence priorities which forced us to eliminate most of the NIS studies are still with us. There unquestionably is a continuing need for basic or contingency intelligence, but other needs are currently more pressing than for the encyclopedic NIS type of coverage. Furthermore, various components of the Intelligence Community have in recent years been producing basic intelligence reports tailored to their own specific requirements which have, in part, compensated for the loss of NIS material. We do not have current coverage on all of the low priority areas, as you discovered in your work on Haiti, but publication of the worldwide Factbook has been continued. So, the situation is perhaps not as bleak as you may have believed.

Again, thanks for your thoughts on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

STANSFIELD TURNER

LETTER TO: Mr. Claud H. Corrigan  
Public Administration Service

SUBJECT : NIS Program

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PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SERVICE

1776 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, NORTHWEST  
DIAL AREA CODE 202—833- 2505

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20036  
CABLE ADDRESS: PASWA

2 December 1977

ADM Stansfield Turner USN  
Director of Central Intelligence  
Washington, D.C.

rec'd 9 Dec  
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77-10577

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12 Dec

Dear Admiral Turner:

This letter is to invite your attention to a matter of intelligence interest. It concerns the National Intelligence Survey, about which a long-since departed CIA intellectual once wrote that it would be produced only as long as our senior military commanders could recall what happened at Tarawa. The Agency--which killed the NIS in 1974--didn't wait that long. In order to bring this issue directly to your attention, I am asking Darnell Whitt to deliver it to your executive assistant, whom I understand he knows on a personal basis. You may recall that Darnell elicited from me a candid commentary on the Senior Reserve Officers Course during the year that you assumed the presidency of the Naval War College.

It is difficult to be brief about the now-neglected field of basic or contingency intelligence. Just how neglected was brought home very sharply to me when I participated as a watchstanding Captain in the Naval Reserve during Exercise Night Strike 77 on 1-7 October. I found that the only useful background intelligence on the exercise area--Haiti--available to the briefers and staff in the OpNav Intelligence Plot consisted of a DIA port study and the NIS General Survey of Haiti, whose information was nearly 10 years old.

The irony of this incident is that as chief of the General Survey Branch of the then-Office of Basic and Geographic Intelligence of CIA, I supervised the production of that Survey of Haiti in 1970. Apparently nothing comparable has been done since.

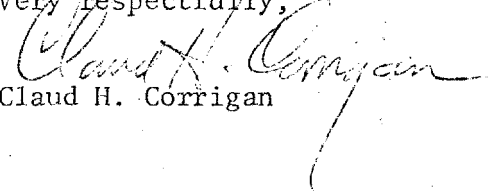
A word about the background for suspending these surveys: they are no longer produced as the result of a DDI decision in 1973 to cease funding these interdepartmental publications. Although the other departments concerned--State and Defense--protested mildly, it wasn't their money, and the NIS was an easy package for the Agency to drop in a year of shrinking budgets. As a production-oriented GS-15, I almost certainly was not told every reason for the action. The explanation most widely offered was that the NIS was not being widely used within the Agency but rather was a product in demand among the military services (who presumably should thus produce it themselves). When the Unified and Specified Commands did ultimately protest the decision, they were pretty much ignored.

To go back even further, the NIS had been put out by CIA since 1949 as a "service of common concern" as defined by NSCID-3. Admittedly, as originally conceived, it was an overly ambitious, unwieldy encyclopedic product that could not be kept up to date. Guided by user reactions, however, we had streamlined it to a basic General Survey of between 80 and 200 pages, produced for 125 countries on a schedule that varied according to priority. We updated the USSR and China every 2 years, France and other important countries every 3 years, and most of the rest of the world every 4 or 5 years. Each year, my branch processed 30 Surveys, which were coordinated with State (and the U.S. Embassy involved), DIA, and the three service intelligence agencies. We also added an NIS Factbook that updated key statistics every 6 months. Every user survey that was taken tended to support our view that we were putting out a practical and useful product. Those of us who went on to other jobs (as I did in 1973) or retired early (as I did when the CIA History Staff was abolished in 1975) were strongly convinced that a mistake was being made and that sooner or later it would be necessary to again publish a structured basic intelligence publication for planners and operators.

I'm still a believer, of course, or I wouldn't be writing this letter. The sight of that old Haiti General Survey still being used brought the debates of 1972-73 back in a way that I can't put aside. The warning about forgetting the lessons of Tarawa sticks in my mind. And, I am very much aware that the men who made the decision to kill the Survey had one common characteristic--they had all been in charge of producing intelligence for a very long time, but they didn't have to use their products. I'm certain, from the views they expressed, that some of them had never been in the position of an intelligence user.

Except for my Reserve function as C.O. of the Defense Attache unit, I'm out of the Intelligence business now, but my present work schedule as an editor and consultant is such that I could be available to discuss this issue, should you so desire.

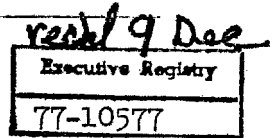
Very respectfully,

  
Claud H. Corrigan

## PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION SERVICE

1776 MASSACHUSETTS AVENUE, NORTHWEST • WASHINGTON, D. C. 20036  
DIAL AREA CODE 202—833- 2505 CABLE ADDRESS: PASWA

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Very respectfully,

  
Claud H. Corrigan

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